

NEWS RELEASE

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THREE LOUISIANA WATERSHEDS NAMED IN MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE First Steps in New Major Conservation Effort

ALEXANDRIA, November 23, 2009 – State Conservationist Kevin Norton announced today three watersheds in Louisiana will be a part of a new initiative to improve water quality and the overall health of the Mississippi River Basin—the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative.

“The Mermentau, Bayou Macon, and Boeuf River Watersheds were selected to be a part of the new initiative based on the potential in the area for managing nutrient runoff from agricultural land,” said Norton. “We will work with producers in these three watersheds to implement voluntary conservation practices to improve water quality.”

The Mermentau Watershed is located in Calcasieu, Jefferson Davis, Acadia, Lafayette, Cameron, and Vermilion Parishes; the Bayou Macon Watershed is located in West Carroll, East Carroll, Richland, Madison, Franklin, and Catahoula Parishes; and the Boeuf River Watershed is located in Morehouse, West Carroll, Ouachita, Richland, Caldwell, Franklin, and Catahoula Parishes.

Louisiana’s announcement was part of a national announcement made by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack which included 41 watersheds in 12 states, known as Focus Areas. The selected watersheds cover over 42 million acres, or more than 5 percent of the Basin's land area.

"The USDA is committed to working cooperatively with agricultural producers, partner organizations and State and local agencies to improve water quality and the quality of life for the tens of millions of people who live in the Mississippi River Basin, the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative will help" Vilsack said. "Today's announcement is another step toward achieving this goal, and I encourage as many eligible participants as possible to join us in this major conservation effort."

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**THREE LOUISIANA WATERSHEDS
NAMED IN MISSISSIPPI RIVER BASIN
HEALTHY WATERSHEDS INITIATIVE**

11/23/09

The Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI), which was announced on September 24, 2009, will provide approximately \$320 million in USDA financial assistance over the next four years for voluntary projects in priority watersheds in Arkansas, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Tennessee and Wisconsin. MRBI will help producers implement conservation and management practices that prevent, control and trap nutrient runoff from agricultural land.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) manages the initiative, and NRCS State Conservationists from the 12 watershed states selected the watersheds with guidance from State Technical Committees and state water quality agencies.

Next, smaller watershed projects will be selected through a competitive process under NRCS' Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI). NRCS assistance will be leveraged with contributions from partners, expanding the capacity available to improve water quality throughout the Basin.

Three requests for project proposals will be announced in the next several weeks, including one for CCPI. Funding for CCPI projects will come from NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Stewardship Program and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program.

Two other requests for proposals will fund projects through the Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program and Conservation Innovation Grants. For information about these programs, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs.

For information about the Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative, including eligibility requirements, please visit the MRBI web page at http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/mrbi/mrbi_overview.html or your USDA Service Center. A map of the project area is available the [MRBI Programs webpage](#).

For a complete list of selected watersheds, go to the USDA News Room at <http://www.usda.gov>

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